

LESSON 2D—NARRATIVE: WHO ARE MONTANA'S ANCIENT PEOPLE?

The ancient people are ancestors of Montana Indians.

Imagine studying the Civil War in history class and then sharing your knowledge with your family later that evening. Your grandmother tells you about her great-great-uncle who fought in the Civil War. In fact, she shows you copies of letters he wrote to his parents about his experiences and wartime conditions. The more we know about our family histories—about the **generations** that came before us—the more excited we get about learning even more about times gone by. Archaeologists often get just as excited when they study ancient people.

Archaeologists study the past to learn about ancient daily life. By studying artifacts and their contexts, they develop theories and beliefs about how people lived long ago. However, they sometimes discover that direct information about many details in ancient life is difficult or impossible to find. In hopes of finding such details, archaeologists turn to historical information and oral history from Indian people to help reconstruct the distant past. They study the **traditions** of American Indians—the folkways passed down over many generations—for clues to unravel the past. **Legends** are stories—told from one generation to another and handed down for hundreds of years—that describe events and beliefs of a particular tribe. Together, legends and traditions tell of a way of life of long ago, of how a tribe's ancestors spent their time on the earth. Tribal historians record these ancient stories for future generations.

Archaeologists combine their knowledge of traditions and legends with their scientific studies of artifacts to reconstruct the past.

Archaeologists believe that most of the ancient people of Montana were **hunters and gatherers**. These people did not plant crops or build permanent settlements. Hunting and gathering people traveled in small family **bands**, or groups, as they moved across their territories hunting animals and harvesting wild plants. They were very familiar with the behaviors and patterns of the wild animals and plants they used for food and knew where, when, and how to find them. People may have formed larger groups at some times of the year as they joined with others to follow a particular herd of animals. They may have banded together, too, for safety from predators or unfriendly fellow humans. Ancient people held annual gatherings to visit relatives and friends, to trade, and to marry. But most of the time they lived in small groups and moved their camps with the seasons and according to the availability of food and other resources they needed (for example, water, wood, and stone.)

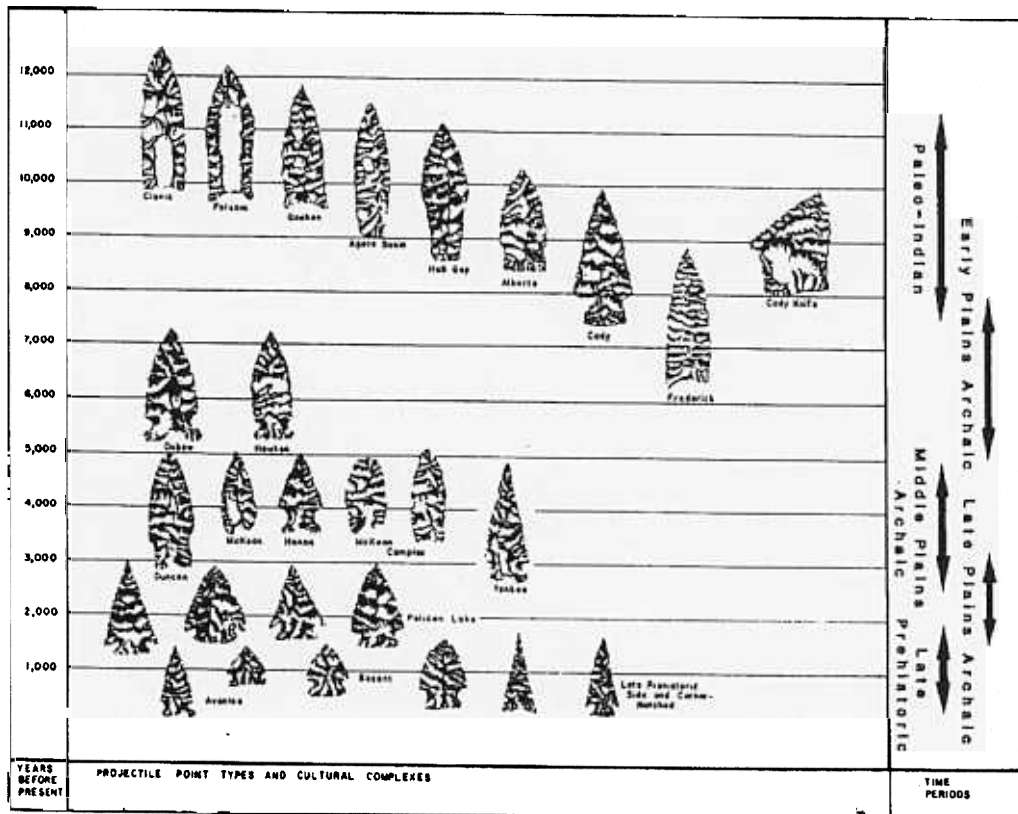
Montana's archaeological record, which goes back about 12,000 years, is quite young when compared to others in the Old World—which may be hundreds of thousands or even a million years old. When studying Montana prehistory, archaeologists divide the time of human presence into three major phases, or **periods**. Each

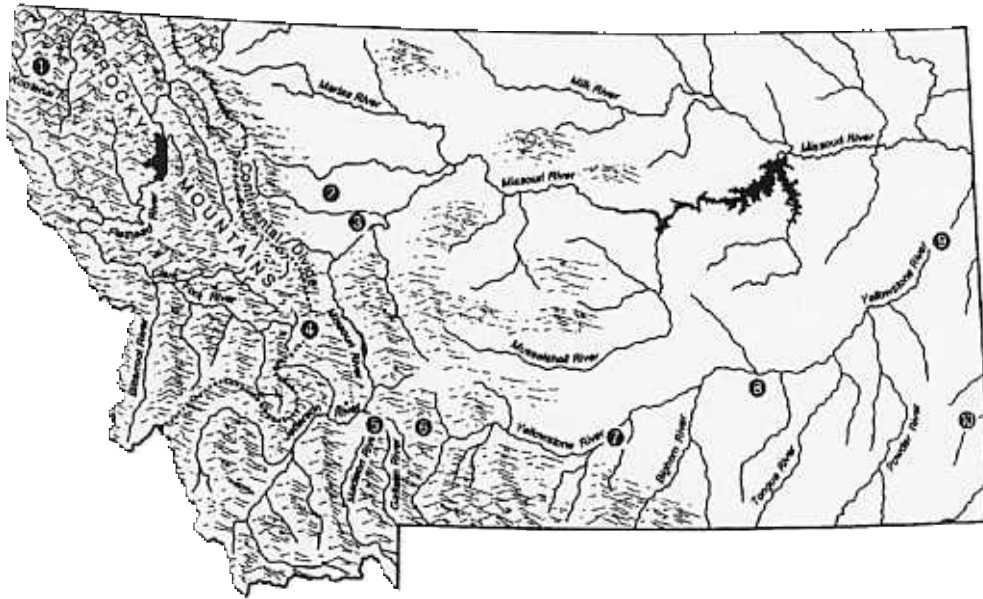
of these periods covers a distinctive time frame and is also generally distinguished by differences in **subsistence**, or the ways in which the people hunted and gathered their food. Other differences among these three periods can be found in the ways prehistoric people made their tools and weapons.

Evidence of the earliest people in Montana is found at a few sites identified as existing at around 9000 to 10,000 B.C. These sites were active at the beginning of the **Paleoindian Period**, which lasts until about 6000 B.C. This period is also sometimes referred to as the **Early Prehistoric Period**. The Paleoindian Period coincides with the end of the last glacial period of the Pleistocene Epoch and the beginning of the Holocene Epoch. Although no one knows how many,

few people are thought to have lived in Montana during this period. Most sites dating from this time are found east of the Rocky Mountains or in southwest Montana. People at this time are thought to have been very **nomadic**, moving often from place to place along the major river valleys and nearby uplands within a large territory. They moved their camps regularly during the year to find the best sources of food and needed supplies. To subsist, they hunted mammals, large and small. They probably hunted the mammoth until it became extinct in Montana sometime before 9000 B.C. after which deer, bison and smaller mammals became their primary sources of meat. They also gathered wild berries, nuts, and plants for food. A variety of animals provided the materials for their clothing. Direct evidence of Paleoindian

Montana archaeologists divide prehistory into chronological periods to help organize archaeological evidence according to time. Between periods, some things changed while others stayed the same. Projectile points are one technological characteristic that did change over time. *Courtesy GCM Services, Inc.*





A few of Montana's many important archaeological sites are marked on this map. They are as follows: (1) Pipe Creek Quarries (source of pipestone); (2) Sun River Medicine Wheel; (3) Ulm Pishkun State Park (buffalo jump); (4) MacHaffie Site (Paleoindian); (5) Madison Buffalo Jump State Park; (6) Anzick Site (Paleoindian); (7) Pictograph Cave State Park; (8) Armell's Creek Tipi Ring Site; (9) Hagen Site (earth lodges); and (10) Mill Iron Site (Paleoindian). *Courtesy Montana Historical Society.*

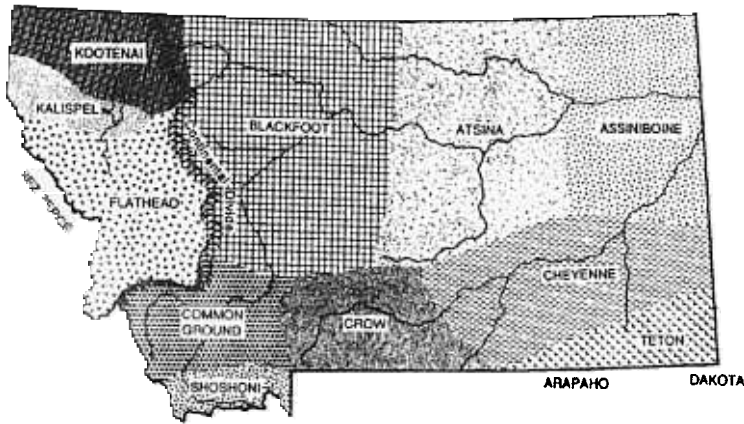
shelters has not yet been found in Montana. Based on evidence from other areas, archaeologists believe the Paleoindians lived in small dwellings with wooden pole frames covered with animal hides or wood. Occasionally, they also used caves and other natural shelters as well.

Stone, wood, and bone were the materials these early people used to make tools. The oldest known stone points are large, some measuring over six inches in length, and are thought to have been attached to hand-held wooden shafts or spears. Paleoindian points and other tools that archaeologists have found from this period show a high degree of craftsmanship and are often made of exotic or high-quality stone. The excavation of one ancient Paleoindian campsite, the Barton Gulch site near Ruby Reservoir in southwestern Montana, has provided much information about these first Montanans.

Gradual climatic changes in Montana developed as the Ice Age

ended. New flora flourished as the earth warmed and ice receded. Habitats evolved that were no longer suitable for megafauna, and several animals, including the mammoth, became extinct. Over time, Paleoindian people began to rely more heavily on a diversified diet of smaller animals and wild plants for subsistence. Later, increased numbers of grinding tools and baking hearths offer evidence that plant use increased at this time. This new period is called the **Archaic**, or sometimes the **Middle Prehistoric Period**, and it extended from about 6000 B.C. to A.D. 500.

At the beginning of the Archaic Period, some of the changes in settlement and subsistence may have been caused by a long duration of drought-like conditions, referred to as the Altithermal. This environment forced animals to seek shelter and forage in places where they could find water. Consequently, people followed the animals to these areas. Because they needed to stay near water, people



This map shows the distribution of Indian tribes in Montana at the time of Lewis and Clark, 1804–1806. Many other groups probably lived in the area of Montana during the twelve thousand years of prehistory. *Courtesy Montana Historical Society.*

probably remained in one location for longer periods and thus were less nomadic than Paleoindians. Little is known about early Archaic shelter, but archaeologists believe that small skin-covered wickiups, and later (after 3000 B.C.) tipis, were used. Also reflecting changes in Archaic lifeways were changes in technology. In addition to more plant processing tools, people in the Archaic Period made smaller projectile points. Archaeologists believe that these smaller, notched points were hafted to long darts and propelled with the help of a throwing stick, or **atlatl** (pronounced “at-LAT-l”). The atlatl allowed hunters to stalk game and kill animals from a greater distance than a spear did.

The **Late Prehistoric Period** (A.D. 500–A.D. 1800) began with the introduction of the bow and arrow in Montana. This weapon was easy to transport and accurate to use. Although bows and arrows are rarely preserved in the archaeological record, the smaller notched stone projectile points (“arrowheads”) found at many Late Prehistoric sites indicate that people during this period used the **bow and arrow** as a hunting

weapon.

Coinciding with the end of the Archaic Period and beginning of the Late Prehistoric Period is an apparent increase in the bison (or “buffalo”) herds. This was probably due in part to climatic conditions that were favorable for the growth of prairie and plains grasslands. Archaeological evidence indicates that the bison was important to the survival of many Montana Indian cultures, going back as far as Late Paleoindian times. In the Late Prehistoric Period, people built a way of life around seasonal bison hunting expeditions, hunting the vast herds as they roamed the plains. Horses were not available in Montana until about A.D. 1750, so Late Prehistoric people traveled on foot. They used dogs to transport gear with a **travois**, two poles lashed together for carrying household goods. Some Blackfoot elders today refer to this prehistoric time before horses as the “**Dog Days.**”

A most spectacular development during the Late Prehistoric period was the increased use of **buffalo drives and jumps**. Communal bison hunting at this time was on a scale seldom seen in the world before, or since. Late Prehistoric hunters systematically drove large numbers of bison from their grazing areas and stampeded them into traps and over jumps. The bison were then butchered and the meat dried and preserved for the winter season. Nearly every part of the buffalo was used, as implements and tools and for clothing and shelter. Montana has the highest concentration of buffalo jump sites in North America. Our plains and mountain foothills are

perfect places for stampeding buffalo off ridgetops and cliffs. The Madison Buffalo Jump and Ulm Pishkun are two places that Late Prehistoric hunters and gatherers used repeatedly as buffalo jumps.

Horses and guns had a profound effect on native lifeways. Most tribes acquired these items before they ever saw the Europeans who brought them to the New World. They obtained horses and guns from other tribes who had already begun trading with the newcomers. They quickly adapted this new technology to bison hunting and to warfare. Still, some of the old ways remained the same, including the use of the bow and arrow, tipis, and travois.

Although archaeologists know that some of the prehistoric groups are the ancestors of the tribes now living in Montana, it is not yet possible to identify specific Indian tribes of Montana during prehistoric times. This is because most of the artifacts that have been preserved (projectile points, tipi rings, hearths, etc.) were commonly used by different tribes. The archaeological record does not contain clear evidence of the languages, beliefs, and social customs that often distinguish one tribe from another. We do know that the Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenai, and Blackfeet were living in Montana before the historic period. Other tribes—the

Kiowa, Apache, and Navajo—may have lived in our area before migrating to the south. Some tribes moved into Montana as Euro-Americans settled the eastern United States and began pushing these Indians westward. These included the Crow, Sioux, Cheyenne, Gros Ventre, Chippewa, and Assiniboine. The Shoshone—who are a Great Basin tribe—are thought to have once expanded up along the Rocky Mountain Front as far north as Canada before being pushed back south by the Blackfeet.

As Euro-Americans explored and settled Montana during the 1800s, Indians were forced to change their lifestyles. The newcomers killed large numbers of bison, reducing the size of the herds dramatically. Settlers farmed and ranched land formerly roamed by the nomadic tribes. Cities and towns developed as the railways came through. The hunting and gathering way of life for Montana's Indians, which had existed for almost 12,000 years, came to an end.

Montana's tribes today work to preserve their past. Pow-wows provide glimpses of ancient ceremonies and long-standing traditions. Many tribes record their oral histories, stories, and languages for future generations. And many archaeologists work with Montana's Indians to help understand and preserve the past.

LESSON 2D—VOCABULARY: WHO ARE MONTANA'S ANCIENT PEOPLE?

Archaic/Middle Prehistoric Period _____

atlatl _____

bands _____

bow and arrow _____

buffalo drives and jumps _____

"Dog Days" _____

generations _____

hunters and gatherers _____

Late Prehistoric Period _____

legends _____

nomadic _____

Paleoindian/Early Prehistoric Period _____

periods _____

subsistence _____

traditions _____

travois _____

LESSON 2D—ARCH ACTIVITY: BUFFALO JUMP (USING THE LAND AS A TOOL)

Grades: 4–8

Time: two to three 45-minute sessions

Content Area: language arts, expressive arts, geography (land forms)

Who: whole class and small groups

*** Note:** Ulm Pishkun Buffalo Jump trunk is available from Cascade County Historical Society, in Great Falls at (406) 452-3462.

Materials:*

clay

sticks and branches

stones, rocks

cardboard box lids, 11 x 16"

Presentation Materials:

paper and pencils for lists,

butcher paper or newsprint,

markers, etc.

OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME:

- Students will gain understanding of what a buffalo jump is, and what makes a good buffalo jump.
- Students will draw or make a clay model of a jump site and discuss its uses and characteristics.
- Students will synthesize their knowledge of buffalo jumps by developing a short presentation advertising their site.
- Students will be able to go to a buffalo jump site and understand what they are seeing and how jump sites were used.

ACTIVITY:

Have students read or listen to the attached story: "When Bison and the People Lived Together."

Part I: Making a Buffalo Jump

1. After reading or listening to the story, the class talks briefly about what factors make a good buffalo jump site (cliff/slope arrangement, direction, approach, grasses, wind, buffalo nearby, water, etc.)

2. Break up into small groups. Each group will create a buffalo jump out of clay (or, using trowels and gardening

tools, they may make one out of dirt and rocks in the schoolyard). Use sticks and rocks to indicate the natural environment of the jump site. Each buffalo jump should include approach, a gentle rise before the cliffs, dropoff, slope, processing area, and campsite.

3. Silent walkabout: The class silently walks around to view and privately evaluate each model buffalo jump, thinking about good ideas they see to incorporate into their own model. Students may return to their own model to adjust or improve it.

4. As a class, discuss each model. How do bison get to the cliffs? What grasses are there? Where are the people camped? How close is water? At this point, the teacher can provide more detailed information about buffalo jumps:

- Tipi rings often help identify where people camped at different times.
- Different parts of the cliff may have been used as kill sites at different times, depending on conditions and layout of the geography.
- Discuss seasonality of the hunts: Did people only hunt in the fall? What times of year would buffalo jump sites

be likely to be used? Archaeological evidence shows that jumps were most frequently used between late summer and early spring—even as late as February or March. How do they know? They looked at the development of fetal bones of unborn calves inside pregnant cows that were killed, and they also measured jawbones and tooth development of yearling calves. This told them how old the fetal and young animals were when they died. Assuming that buffalo are born in the spring, archaeologists can then tell what time of year the jump was used by the age of the fetal and yearling calves.

PART II: THE PRESENTATION

1. To the entire class, introduce the concept of the Jump Site Presentation (advertisement for their jump site) and establish criteria for a successful presentation. Criteria might be:

- a) Provide five reasons why this is a good jump site;
- b) Include a visual aid;
- c) Follow the format of a commercial: concise, fast moving, using jingles or slogans to reinforce message;
- d) Provide jump site with a name that tells something about it; and
- e) View some TV commercials in class and talk about what makes an ad effective.

2. Reconvene small groups. Each group gets to rework its buffalo jump model to incorporate any new information. Then each group develops its own advertising campaign—from the point of view of a group of hunters hoping to attract a bison herd to their jump site. Each advertising presentation should follow the criteria estab-

lished by the class and should be convincing and creative. The presentation should extol the virtues of the site: its design, how you would use it, what seasons you would like the bison to come, the features that make it the best jump site (ease of access for bison, rich grasses to offer, efficient processing area, and “a great archaeological dig site that will make you famous for generations to come!”

3. (May be done in a third session). Each group gives its presentation to the class. The class represents the community of buffalo on the Northern Plains, and everyone discusses the presentations.

EXTENSIONS:

4-8:

- Create a model archaeological dig at students’ jump sites, using hand-made miniature bones and artifacts.
- Study bison biology.
- List other ways people use the land as a tool.
- Visit a buffalo jump in your area (Madison Buffalo Jump State Park and Ulm Pishkun State Park Visitor Center are the most accessible). You may want to have small groups present their advertising campaigns at the buffalo jump. (Teacher or parent might videotape presentations.)

This archaeology activity is adapted from a lesson plan created by Krys Holmes, Claudia Crase, and Geoff Wyatt for Montana Archaeology Week 1999, organized by the Montana Archaeological Society and sponsored by various federal, state, and private sources.

LESSON 2D—ARCH ACTIVITY: BUFFALO JUMP
STORY: WHEN BISON AND THE PEOPLE LIVED TOGETHER

Sometimes we were called buffalo, and sometimes we were called bison, but always we were important. We covered the Northern Plains in huge herds. In spring we moved into the bottomlands for their moist grasses. During winter blizzards, we huddled in the trees for protection. When fair winds blew, we spread out across the benches (a bench is a terrace or shelf of land) and buttes (buttes are small, isolated hills with steep sides), munching on the rich grassland and protecting our young.

The People lived among us, and they moved across the land just as we did. They needed us for food, for clothing, and for lodges, which they made out of our hides. And so they watched us very carefully. We watched only the lead female buffalo of the herd. Wherever she went, we went. When she ran, we ran. When she grazed, we formed a large circle around the little red calves to protect them, and we grazed.

Of all the People, there was one person we held in deep respect. That person was the Buffalo Runner. The Buffalo Runner was a very fast runner, a very brave soul, and he knew the buffalo herds and our ways. The Buffalo Runner had a special something in his heart, something no one else knew about. But the buffalo knew, and we respected the Buffalo Runner. Did I say "his"? Do you think the Buffalo Runner was always a boy? That is a secret. I will only say that each Buffalo Runner in each tribe was different. There were no two alike.

One day, out on the plains that you now call Montana, my herd was grazing along a low bench. There were hundreds of us! And our furry brown humps soaked up the autumn sun. We moved slowly, with the wind and the sun at our backs. We could smell water close by, a very pleasant smell. But because we were walking with the wind, we couldn't smell anything up ahead.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw one of the calves trotting off up a slope. It made a funny bleating sound, like it was lost or hurt. Our lead female trotted up after it, and the rest of the herd followed her. We liked to stay together, and none of us can see well over long distances. Then I saw the odd little calf run off again in the same direction, making its hurt sound. The lead female became concerned, and this time, she ran after it. The rest of the herd was suddenly alert, and we all started trotting together.

Suddenly, the bulls from the back of the herd started running very fast, almost pushing us from behind. They had heard a wolf! We all put our heads down, and the whole herd started running, like a single animal with ten thousand hooves. We naturally followed the lead female. Where she swerved, we swerved, and where she turned, we turned. But she was following this little calf, which by now was running faster than any calf I have ever seen. And it was running upright on its hind legs.

It was the Buffalo Runner! It was



Fallen buffalo pictograph found in western Montana. This rock art may represent a buffalo jump.

not a calf at all, but a person with a brave heart and powerful legs and a calf's skin draped over his shoulders, running right in front of our speeding herd. We all ran together—the Buffalo Runner, the lead female, and the herd—as though we were one being. And behind us ran the wolf-like creatures—not wolves at all, but helpers of the Buffalo Runner, dressed in wolf skins. Together we raced, in one thundering movement, panicked by the surprise of it all, and herded along between two broken lines of rocks and branches laid out on the ground. Running between these lines of rocks, we skirted a little hill and came up over a small, rolling rise . . . And suddenly the Buffalo Runner vanished! The lead female was almost at his heels when she disappeared, too. I could barely see in the dust and the confusion, but it looked like they had fallen over a cliff. I tried to slow down, but the animals behind me pushed me forward toward the edge of the cliff.

Every animal around me was headed right for the edge. All we thought about was following the lead female. But one of the lines of rock guided us off to the side, splitting the herd into two sections. Most of the animals around me swerved as the rocks led us away from the cliff. Ahead of us spread a gentle slope. A few of the animals still plummeted over the edge. The rest of us thundered down the slope toward a field of grass below. There we slowed down and gathered as a herd again.

As the dust settled, we collected again, with much grunting and calling out between cows and calves.

Soon we could see hunters with their spears at the bottom of the cliff finishing off the animals that had fallen but hadn't died. Up among the rocks of the cliff, we saw the Buffalo Runner crouching on a ledge or stone outcrop. He hadn't fallen over the cliff at all, but had leapt onto this ledge where he watched the other bison cascade like a waterfall right beside him. We admired the Buffalo Runner for his bravery and agility.

Meanwhile the People were very excited. As the hunters killed the animals that had not died in the fall, the rest of the People moved in to clean and butcher them. Everyone worked very hard, even the children. The People spread out along the slope to do their part. The butchers worked near the base of the cliff, right where the buffalo had fallen, skinning the animals and carefully collecting their blood. They removed the meat and organs, saving the tongue and the backstrap for a special feast that evening. They cut the animals' bodies, their carcasses, into parts with edges of sharpened stone and carried the pieces to different work areas along the slope.

One group of people cleaned the heads and hooves. Farther down the slope, grandmothers cooked soup by heating rocks in a fire and dropping them into a stiff bowl made of buffalo hide. They dropped bones into the soup to cook the fat and marrow, the juicy material inside the bones. Before our eyes, the creatures that once were buffalo were transformed into hides, into food, into bone tools, into braided hair ropes, even into sinew—thread made from flesh or

muscle—for sewing and beadwork.

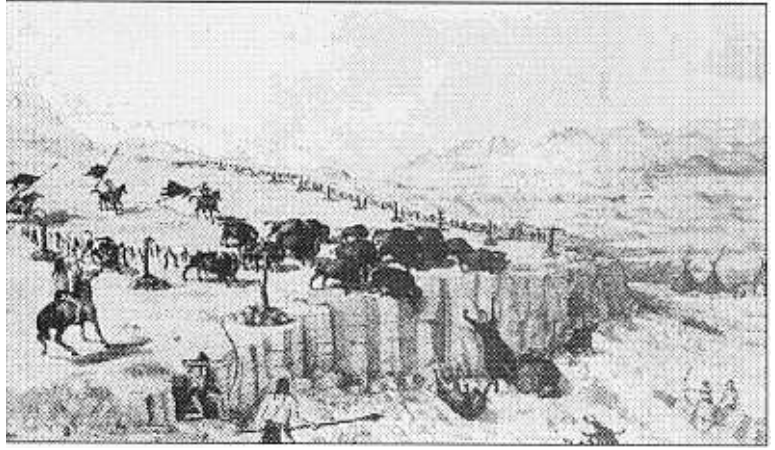
Our herd watched the People to make sure they did everything in the right way and were thankful. As the cows circled around the calves again and the bulls spread out across the valley, we put our heads down into the rich-smelling grass. Our herd felt strong and peaceful again.

All along the slope, between the kill site and the camp, the People worked together in groups, women and men, children and grandparents. The People celebrated their good fortune and praised the Buffalo Runner for a successful hunt. While they processed the skin and meat and viscera, or guts, they thanked all of us for working with them to make a successful hunt.

The autumn sun warmed the lush grasses of the meadow as our herd gathered again and began moving off toward the evening shadows. The Buffalo Runner went to his lodge, his heart full of thanks for our strong herd and for the well-being of his people.

Questions (to ensure that students can visualize the jump):

1. How did the buffalo get up on the cliff?
2. What did the Buffalo Runner do to get the herd to follow?
3. At this buffalo jump, a small hill rose up just before the cliff's edge. How was this hill advantageous to the buffalo hunters?
4. What was the purpose of the broken lines of rocks and branches?
[Teacher note: The broken lines of rocks are called drive lines, and archaeologists are not certain exactly how they were used. They may have



been used in different ways on different occasions.]

5. Which way was the wind blowing? Why is that important?

6. How did the buffalo that were not killed get off the cliff?

7. Why would it be important for the People to have water close by?

8. What are five characteristics that make a good buffalo jump?

One artist's idea of a buffalo jump. Artist unknown. *Courtesy of the Museum of the Rockies.*

LESSON 2D—ARCH ACTIVITY: MONTANA INDIAN CULTURES

Grades: 3–8

Time: 40 minutes +

Content Area: history, writing, and
geography

Who: individual or small group

Materials:

writing paper

pencils

Montana maps

OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME

- Students will learn the histories of and details about Montana's Indian tribes.
- Students will write letters to the Indian reservations in Montana, requesting information about the history of the people of that tribe. Students will locate Indian lands on a Montana map and identify geographic features.

EXTENSIONS

3–8:

- Read literature about American Indians.
- Research other Indian tribes throughout the United States.

ACTIVITY

1. Assign individual students, or small groups of students, to write to each Indian reservation in Montana requesting information about the history of the tribe.

2. Teach students the proper format for letters of request. See below for the addresses for Montana's Indian reservations.

3. Have students locate the Indian reservations on a Montana map and make a map of the reservations they chose to write to. They should include geographic features like rivers, mountains, and towns.

3. After the students receive the materials, have groups make presentations of what materials were sent and what they learned from them.

LESSON 2D—ARCH ACTIVITY: MONTANA INDIAN CULTURES (CONT.)

MONTANA INDIAN RESERVATION ADDRESSES

Blackfeet Indian Reservation (Blackfeet)

Blackfeet Nation
P.O. Box 850
Browning, MT 59417

Rocky Boys Indian Reservation (Chippewa-Cree)

The Chippewa-Cree Business Committee
Box 544, Rocky Boy Route
Box Elder, MT 59521

Fort Belknap Indian Reservation (Assiniboine, Gros Ventre)

Fort Belknap Community Council
P.O. Box 249
Harlem, MT 59526

Fort Peck Indian Reservation (Assiniboine, Sioux)

Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes
P.O. Box 1027
Poplar, MT 59255

Flathead Indian Reservation (Salish, Pend d'Oreilles, Kootenai)

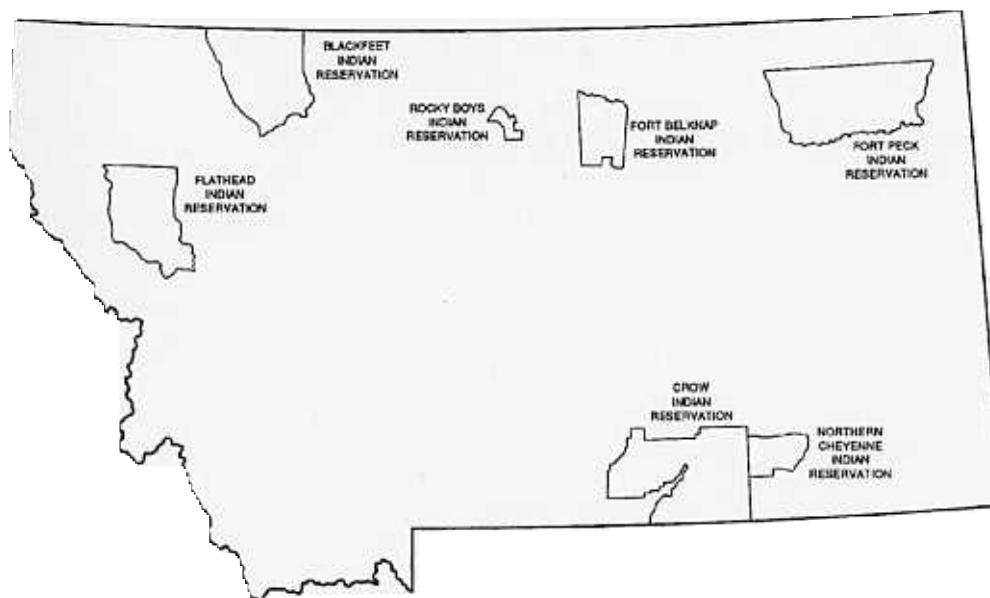
Confederated Salish and Kootenai
Tribes
P.O. Box 278
Pablo, MT 59855

Crow Indian Reservation (Crow)

Crow Tribal Headquarters
P.O. Box 159
Crow Agency, MT 59022

Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation (Northern Cheyenne)

Northern Cheyenne Tribe
P.O. Box 128
Lame Deer, MT 59043



This map shows the location of Indian reservations in present-day Montana. *Courtesy Montana Historical Society.*